

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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MISSIONARIES OF THE KYODAN - inspiration, fellowship, discussion

During the last week in March, missionaries associated with the Kyodan met for two conferences: the first a general meeting at Yumoto, the second for those workers with youth who met later in Tokyo. These missionaries from all parts of Japan represented the mission boards of the eight major cooperating Protestant denominations (Congregational Christian, Evangelical and Reformed, Evangelical United Brethren, Methodist, Presbyterian Church in the USA, Dutch Reformed, United Church of Canada, and Disciples) as well as several others who work with the Kyodan.

(The Kyodan ((United Church of Christ in Japan)) is the largest single Protestant Christian body in Japan. Its membership totals more than 155,000 Christians throughout the country as well as an attendance of 111,000 children in Church Schools. It functions through 1,152 churches and almost 300 evangelical stations. Japanese subscriptions for support run to ¥222,887,000 (\$620,000) annually. Numerous universities, colleges schools, kindergartens, social and rural work centers are affiliated with the United Church.)

Annual Conference of Kyodan Missionaries

From March 29-April 1 around four hundred of these missionaries gathered for worship, fellowship, discussion, and inspiration.

The featured speaker of the conference was Dr. Emil Brunner who made four presentations as well as conducting two long question periods devoted to problems arising out of the lectures.

The first three lectures were on "Faith", "Hope" and "Love" which he had first presented at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California on the E. T. Earl Foundation.

Dr. Brunner is concluding two years as a university missionary at the International Christian University where he has been Professor of Christian Ethics and Philosophy. As this was the last time such a large number of missionaries could hope to hear him he was asked by special request to put together a "spiritual autobiography" which could at the same time be helpful and inspire missionaries in their work. Dr. Brunner gave this recounting of his spiritual development on the final morning; it was followed appropriately by a communion service before the group disbanded to the four corners of Japan to take up again His work.

During this final presentation Dr. Brunner traced his spiritual heritage deep into the roots of Switzerland. "It was particularly since my coming to the Far East," he said, "that I felt thankful for belonging to this oldest republic of our world which was a democracy two hundred years before Columbus discovered America and which has been able to keep its principle of unconditional neutrality since 1515." He traced his spiritual and theological heritage from the lectern of Ragaz through the pulpit of Kutter to the two Blumhardts whose home "was for half a century a well of spiritual dynamic, to which thousands made a pilgrimage in order to be touched by this power of the Holy Spirit." Although dialectical theology is often thought to be the product of World War I and the philosophy of Kierkegaard, to Dr. Brunner Hermann Kutter's "influence upon us [Karl Barth, Eduard Thurneysen and Brunner] has been much deeper than that of Soren Kierkegaard The two Blumhardts never were, nor claimed to be, great thinkers. It was not their thought, it was the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in their lives which attracted so many and which through Kutter impressed us as the reality of God in our midst. The origin of the so-called dialectical theology is not theological or philosophical thought, but the wondrous reality of the Holy Spirit."

Dr. Brunner closed his remarks to the conference asking that this sketch be taken as "an attempt to thank God for what He has given." "I am sure that what I actually did comes far short of the call of the One whom I and all of you want to serve. Whenever I am honored or praised I feel ashamed knowing that this is not what a preacher of the Cross should expect or even accept."

Kyodan Missionaries in Youth Work

On April 1, at the Shinanomachi Student Christian Fellowship, about 40 missionaries met with the Kyodan Youth Commission to discuss problems of cooperation in youth work.

The discussion ranged over a broad area, but in general, two main threads emerged concerning the missionary's proper place in evangelism. (It was emphasized that these need not be mutually exclusive).

1. First, some saw the missionary's function to be one of "feeding" the Church from a point somewhat removed from its center. In such a position, he may act as a "bridging community" between non-Christian Society and the Church; he may act to "condition" youth for the Church's presentation of the Gospel; or he may simply act by personal outreach to areas now untouched by the Church.

The problem with this approach is that the "bridge", or the "conditioner", or the "arm of outreach", though meant to be but an agency, becomes something in itself --- a stopping point for young people.

2. Secondly, others felt that the missionary should plunge closer into the center of the Church's life. Because of the tremendous flow of youth through the Churches, more effort should be toward strengthening the Churches from the center. It is hard to lead youth into the entire life of the Church if the leader is not participating in its entirety. In some cases, the missionary is not willing to make this complete plunge. In other cases, he sometimes is not accepted as a co-worker; his role in the Church has not been determined and he feels alone in trying to work out the nature of, and the means of making his contribution.

It was felt that the Kyoku Youth Commission is one place where a missionary might be used more effectively. And from the missionaries, there was an appeal for better communication from the Kyodan and Kyoku, as well as for help in analyzing and understanding the problems of youth in Japan today.

COLLOQUIAL BIBLE PUBLISHED - the marking of a new era

The celebration of the publication of the complete Bible in Colloquial Japanese on April 15 at the Ginza Church (see Third Golden Jubilee, p2, 3/1/55 issue of JCAN) has a deeper significance than just the publication of another translation of the Bible. To be sure, this in itself is important because the only other Bible in current use in Japan is the one published in 1888 which uses the now archaic formalized language of ancient Japan. The Colloquial Bible breaks through this specialized difficult-to-understand jargon and puts the Living Word into the mouth of the man on the street.

But beyond this, the publication of the Bible in the daily spoken language is symbolic of a trend that we may hope is growing in Japan. This is a trend away from evangelism being the specialized task of a few professionally trained people, and a trend toward every professing Christian being willing and able speak the Word to those about him. As the Rev. Masaki Imaizumi, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Japan Bible Society pointed out to

those assembled at the celebration: it is not just that we now have the Bible, we have the Good News of God in the language of the people and we have a greater chance and greater responsibility to spread this to all of our nation.

(Some encouraging indications of the growth of this trend can be seen in the slowly growing popularity of the method of visitation evangelism, the emphasis on lay evangelism by the current preaching mission of Dr. Stanley Jones (see Stanley Jones' Evangelistic Mission p2-3, 2/15/55 issue of JCAN), and the emphasis in the Centenary Movement on visitation evangelism and mass participation.)

In a message of congratulation to the Japan Bible Society, Prince Mikasa, who is a specialist in Hebrew History (see Royal Lecturer p3,3/1/55 issue of JCAN), indicated some of the improvements in the new translation.

However he also warned that in an effort to make the Bible more readily understandable, some of the deeper meanings had been lost. For instance, the term "children of Israel" in the old translation becomes "People of Israel" in the new. While this is more understandable it loses the connotation of deep group solidarity and unity among the members of the "chosen people". Thus, it will be necessary to keep both translations on our desks for reference and study.

Prime Minister Hatoyama sent congratulations commended The Bible Society for its work, and urged the spreading of the Bible as an effective basis for democracy, morals, and the modern spirit of culture. Representatives of the British, Korean, China and American Bible Societies also brought greetings and congratulations on this joint celebration of the eightieth anniversary of the Japan Bible Society, the 150th anniversary of the (international) United Bible Societies, and the publication of the complete colloquial Bible.

Dr. Emil Brunner, in the principal address of the occasion, emphasized the central importance of the Bible in the theology and the life of the modern Church. He pointed out that the Bible is unique for the Church in these ways: 1) Through it God reveals Himself as a personal God who speaks to us as persons, thus making us truly responsible beings. 2) But when God speaks we find that we are no longer isolated individuals but are called into a great fellowship, a universal brotherhood. 3) God points us to this world but also to the Eternal Kingdom which never perishes. 4) Through the Bible He points us to His own Son through whom He reveals the mystery of man's rebellion against God, overcome by the mystery of His unconditional love towards us, in spite of us.

COUNCIL OF COOPERATION reports, a budget, and strategic planning

On April 12-13, the Council of Cooperation met at Amagi on the Izu Peninsula. The Council is composed of representatives of the Kyodan, Cooperating mission boards, and associated schools and institutions in Japan. It is the central strategic planning group for all of these institutions.

After hearing reports of activities and plans, the group discussed plans for the year. A summary of some of the most important discussions follow. 1) Opportunity Projects are the method through which special grants are received above and beyond already operating projects. In order to make these opportunity projects reflect really current needs, it was decided that there would be a semi annual review of projects and requests. In order to make sure that emphasis was placed in the most strategic places, the Council urged that missionaries discontinue any personal negotiations with home mission boards prior to receiving approval from the Council. Further, a special committee was appointed (and met immediately) to fix the order of priorities among the already approved projects for 1955.

2) Building grants for new churches has been limited to ¥350,000 (about \$1,000) for each church, but in view of the present economic situation, it was recommended by the Council to the Church Building Committee of the Kyodan that the limit be raised to ¥500,000 per project. The amount of \$50,000 for Church Building Projects was given top priority on the askings for this next year.

3) The Scholarship Fund for ministers' children has been decreased through the dispersal of post-war relief funds. In spite of the increased giving by the mission boards and the effort to raise some money for this cause here in Japan, the scholarships for university students will be discontinued and the amount for high and middle school students will be decreased. It is interesting to note that this scholarship aid has been the only method of direct financial aid by missionboards to regular Kyodan ministers. In view of the difficult economic conditions of most of the ministers, it was felt that some method of increasing the budget for this fund from sources here in Japan must be found.

4) Hokkaido was approved as a special area for pioneer evangelism next year with a grant of \$10,000 for this special project. This was done in view of the small number of churches in this area as compared to the unusual opportunities in this newly developing part of Japan.

5) The disparity between the amount of money budgeted for Christian Educational work as compared with Church Evangelistic work was discussed at length. It was recommended that the Inter-boarded Committee (cooperating mission boards in New York) be asked to re-evaluate this proportion.

The budgeted askings for this next year are as follows:

Education in Christian Schools:		Totals
Running expenses	\$ 281,800	
Building projects	\$1,850,277 - - - -	\$2,132,077
Church Evangelism - - - - -		\$ 222,869
Social work		
Running expenses	\$53,000	
Building projects	\$97,774 - - - -	\$ 150,774

THE JAPAN CHRISTIAN QUARTERLY - insights and background

Some readers of this news sheet have commented that our lack of space and short deadline does not allow the inclusion of much background material or interpretation of trends. This is true.

However we would like to introduce the Japan Christian Quarterly to those of our readers who are not already familiar with it. We feel that the Quarterly is by nature the kind of publication which will fill in the background material and give insights into the meanings of general trends in the Christian movement in Japan today.

The themes of the last two issues will give an indication of the nature of the Quarterly. The January issue explored the relation of the Church to the Society of Japan with both theoretical discussions and reports of activities, projects and experiences. The April issue discussed the place of the Christian School in Japan, filling in the historical background, outlining the present situation and looking toward the future. (For a summary summary of one of these articles see Christian Schools in Japan, pp 2-3, Feb. 1, 1955 issue of Japan Christian Activities News.) In addition to these theme articles, there are feature articles, news of personal happenings among the missionary community and reviews of books both theological and those dealing with Japan in General.

Sponsored by the Fellowship of Christian Missionaries, the Quarterly has been coming out four times a year for more than fifteen years. It is written by missionaries and leaders of the Church in Japan, and is published in English. The cost is ¥300 a copy or ¥1,000 a year. A subscriber may send one gift subscription abroad for ¥800, and regular subscriptions abroad cost ¥1,260 or \$3.50. Subscriptions may be sent to the Business Manager Japan Christian Quarterly, Kyobun Kwan, 2 Ginza 4 chome, Chuo ku, Tokyo Japan.

